



SPRINGS

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Newsletter

Forest Restoration Planning Continues *Ecological assessment considers history and future*

By Andrea Gargas

Mike Anderson (shown here) of Bio-Logic Environmental Consulting gave a walking tour of the Highland Way area of Pheasant Branch Conservancy on Tuesday, June 24th. Many possible types of restoration are possible for this area, depending on the long-term goals and available resources. Mike's goal for the evening was to point out things to consider for site rehabilitation, as well as to get feedback from the public.



Our tour began with a review of historic air photos of the site from the 1950s to the present showing how land use has changed over the years. The air photos show that the entire site, except for the oak woods, has been cropland at one time or another. Although never cropped, the oak woods has also undergone significant change. In the 1950 air photo, individual trees are

clearly visible. These are the mature oak trees still present today. However, individual trees are no longer visible in the current air photo because the canopy has closed due to an influx of box elder, elm, black cherry and other species. Mike suggested the influx is typical of oak savanna in southern Wisconsin in which the savanna was originally kept open by fire and later by grazing livestock. Once the livestock are removed new trees and shrubs start growing and the canopy closes, often to the detriment of the remaining oak trees.

We headed north down the trail to the mowed field. Mike pointed out the invasive plants along the way, with ideas on strategizing improvements of the area. Near the Highland Way entrance there are stands of pink-flowering crown vetch

... See Restoration Plan, page 4

Bell's Vireos Nesting in Conservancy

By Mike McDowell

A pair of Bell's Vireos successfully nested and fledged young this summer in the conservancy - a first-time reported occurrence. These particular vireos are listed by 10 States as a Conservation Concern and in Wisconsin as Threatened. The greatest threat to the Bell's Vireo is habitat loss and degradation. The vireos were discovered at the Dane County property of the



conservancy in early June and were observed carrying food to fledged young in late July. This exciting news helps serve to highlight the thousands of hours volunteers have put into working on restoration efforts at the conservancy. With luck, the birds will return next spring and hopefully become regular summer residents at Pheasant Branch!

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Protect. Restore. Enjoy.



FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

A row of aspens in the conservancy caught me by surprise fifteen or so years ago. Lining the bank where the stream flows by the Harbor Village Condos and towards Lake Mendota, the trees had been precisely gnawed several feet up from the ground. If I remember rightly, some had fallen while others remained standing. Rightly or wrongly, I imagine the beaver knows something. A tree left in such a delicate balance will topple at the slightest touch. So why not make way for it.

Recent visitors to the big springs will realize that the beavers are back—and sharpening their teeth this time on the conservancy viewing deck. Perhaps we can have an article on those beavers in a future newsletter, but know that the deck has been repaired with a combination of rail replacements and some skillful carving.

Read too, about Janet Kane, another of our veteran board members. Janet is profiled here, along with her assistant, Colleen Robinson Klug. By conducting a variety of education programs over the

years, Janet and Colleen have made the conservancy far better known to the public than it otherwise would be. And, thanks to their efforts, a multitude of schoolchildren have been introduced to the crucial role which the natural environment plays in our lives.

Earlier this year the Board of Directors put this education program on sound financial footing in its budget allocation for 2008. Education will continue to compete for grants—with the expectation of repeating the successes it has known in the past. But the effort will be greatly enhanced by an infusion of funds from our regular income. We ask our membership to remember this—and our other multifarious activities—when we ask for your continued interest and support.

Many things happen in the conservancy. Be on the lookout for anything whenever you head that way.

New Directions for Educational Programs

Through the rest of 2008 and 2009, the Friends are sponsoring a new initiative to link field activities with education curricular units with funding from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board. Over the 18 months of the grant, naturalists and volunteers from the Friends will work with representative area teachers to design five field trips that are an integral part of the teachers' instructional units and are based in the new John C. Bock Community Forest.

The grant activities grew out of last year's collaboration with Patty Criscione, Mary York, and Barb Teff – third grade teachers at Elm Lawn Elementary School. Friends staff planned a field trip to complement their FOSS unit on water. At the conservancy, students could see first-hand how the concepts and principles they learned in the classroom come to life in their community. They observed how the marsh filters water and moderates floods. They had experience with water quality testing, comparing water from the detention ponds and the springs. They learned about ways to promote infiltration to sus-

tain ground water levels. The water tower sparked questions about the city water supply.

If you would like to help with designing future field trips, or if you'd like to arrange a trip to the conservancy for a class, youth group, or organization, contact the Friends Education Coordinator, Colleen Robinson Klug, at colleen_fopb@charter.net, or 231-6035. 2008 marks an important milestone for the Friends education programs. With strong membership support, the board approved funding the monthly conservancy Day programs and most of the class field trips through the operating budget. With this funding base for ongoing programs, we can pursue grants to support new initiatives.

If you'd like more information about the Friends' education programs, or if you'd like to help as a volunteer or as a paid naturalist, contact Janet Kane, the Friends' Education Chair, at kanejam@tds.net, or 831-1452.

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www.pheasantbranch.org

A Walk Through Time . . .

The archeology of Pheasant Branch

By Bruce Froehle

On the third Thursday in July, 2008, two dozen adults and three boys gathered at the Orchid Heights Park Pavilion in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy to hear a story. The story was told by Amy Rosebrough, Assistant State Archeologist, from the Wisconsin Historical Foundation. The occasion was Conservancy Education Day sponsored by the Friends of Pheasant Branch

Amy's story began approximately 12,000 years ago. A great lobe of ice drew back from what we now call the Johnstown Moraine, exposing the watercourse we now call Pheasant Branch. Humans began to occupy the exposed tundra almost immediately. We call these people Early Paleo-Indians, though the name makes them sound as much like a geological era as a human community.

This native people lived and breathed, hunted and bred, on the land of bogs and till and spruce and birch the ice left behind. They drank from the springs below the hill that is visible today from the Pavilion. The springs are a wound, bleeding water, the glacier left as it retreated north-east. The glacier also left drumlins behind. They trail across Dane County today in the form of long, low, anonymous hills. The people left almost nothing – only scattered Clovis-fluted spear points, remnants of Stone Age weapons.

Pheasant Branch has been continuously populated since the

Pleistocene, subsequently by the Late Paleo-Indians, then by Early, Middle and Late Archaic peoples and then, at about the time Hebrew tribes were settling the lands we call Israel today, by the first civilization to leave significant traces on this North American land, the people of the Woodland period. We can see them today, these traces. They are the precise conical marks we call burial mounds. The mounds are evidence that time, in its rough mercy, allowed the Woodland people to flourish here as no other humans had. Supported by imported plants, especially beans, squash and corn, and by the concept of cultivation, and finally by technological revolutions, especially the bow-and-arrow, these people immortalized themselves with earth carvings.

The Woodland people built mounds – probably between 500 . . . See *A Walk Through Time*, page 4



Amy Rosebrough, Assistant State Archeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Foundation led a tour of the Conservancy in July.

Fundraiser Event Fun and Successful

By Rick Kurz

On Sunday afternoon, July 13, the Friends came together for the second annual summer fundraiser at the beautiful Capital Brewery Beer Garden. This year's theme was "Keep on Rollin" and featured music by the "Relics," a rock-and-roll band that played lively dance hits from the fifties and sixties. The Relics partially donated their services as a contribution to the fundraiser.

The major door prize, a Hobie kayak with seat and paddle, was donated by The Boathouse with help from individual donors from the Middleton Beach Road Neighborhood Association. Additional door prizes included a refurbished



Mongoose mountain bike from our friends at Budget Bicycle on Regent St. in Madison, a backpack from Madison's west side REI Store, and a whimsical bird carving from Duane and Alita Barmore. Food and beverages were available from the Capital Brewery and from Trader Gus's Athens Gyros, the event's two other major sponsors.

Publicity for the event was once again donated by The Printing Place, and the Middleton Times Tribune featured a timely front-page article publicizing the event. After expenses, the event netted slightly more than \$1,400. A big thank

you goes out to all of the donors, those who attended, and to all who worked to make the event possible.

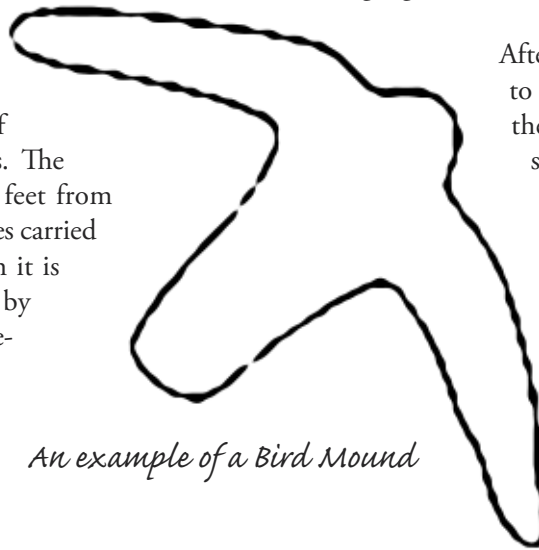
A Walk Through Time . . . *Continued from page 3*

and 1200 C.E. – on the summit of the hill above the springs in the Conservancy. (Today, they are obscured by sumac and other plants.) Below the mounds, and the bones in the mounds, east of the springs, there were once two large effigies, since trampled by cattle, hauled away for fill and, finally, plowed under.

The effigy mounds took the form of birds with straight, outstretched wings. The larger figure spread more than 140 feet from wing-tip to wing-tip. These soil shapes carried a meaning that is now lost – though it is the subject of continuing speculation by both Ho-Chunk elders and state archeologists. (See *Indian Mounds of Wisconsin* by Bob Birmingham and Leslie Eisenberg for the most recent archeological speculation.)

So we wonder. We wonder what the Woodland people believed about the path of life and the path of death, about hills and their relationship to the Upper World, about springs and the creatures of the Lower World. The message is elusive, but we can still see what was built with the earth

here, with the mute ground. This is the story that was told this recent July evening; the story of a vocabulary that could be covered with grass and of the people who spoke that ancestral language, from whom we inherited the place we now call, in our language, Pheasant Branch.



An example of a Bird Mound

After two hours, and a walk from the pavilion to the springs, the group dispersed back into the present day. There is an inexhaustible supply of stories on display at the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Thanks to the Education Committee, you can now hear one every month. You can learn all about Bats in September!

The Committee is always open to ideas for new programs – as well as new members and funding sources. Janet Kane welcomes suggestions and questions at 831-1452 or kane-fam@tds.net. Colleen Robinson Klug can be reached at 231-6035 or colleen_fopb@charter.net. Please contact either Janet or Colleen if you wish to volunteer at a Conservancy Education Day or be on the Education Committee.

Restoration Plan . . . *Continued from page 1*

(*Coronilla varia*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*). Off to the edges there are stands of sumac (*Rhus* sp.). Although sumac is native, it has a somewhat aggressive habit.

On the west side of the trail there is very dense underbrush; a person would have to crawl to get through this area. The underbrush is invasive honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.) and buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Although these shrubs may appear intimidating because of their size, they are in fact reasonable to control. The east side of the trail has a more open appearance, with the notable invasive being the legume sweet clover (*Melilotis* spp.).

Sweet clover may be harder to eradicate, since there could be up to a 20-year-old seed bank buried in the soil. Sweet clover seeds have been known to remain viable in the soil for as long as 100 years. Burns, cutting, and judicious use of herbicides must each

be considered for proper management of invasive species.

As a basic rule, Mike Anderson suggested that we first focus on preserving the highest quality areas that still exist, and then tackle the more degraded areas as resources allow.

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For example, the oak woodland still has a relatively intact herbaceous groundlayer and would benefit from the removal of invasive shrubs and the invading trees that are crowding the oak trees.

Share Your Comments - Attend a Public Meeting:

Mike will share the results of his vegetation sampling, preliminary restoration and management recommendations, and solicit public comments at a meeting on Wednesday, November 5, from 6:00 to 7:30 pm at the Middleton Public Library, 7425 Hubbard Avenue, Middleton.

Janet Kane and Colleen Robinson Klug: *A Friends of Pheasant Branch Profile*

By Bruce Froehle

Janet Kane and Colleen Robinson Klug are true environmental educators at heart. Their combined efforts and experience have created an award-winning environmental education program sponsored by the Friends of Pheasant Branch.

Last year 15 elementary school classes made field trips to the conservancy, involving 325 students and 70 adults. Previously, the Friends brought together teachers and local naturalists to produce a book of 31 lesson plans called “Branch Out! to Pheasant Branch Conservancy.” This work was funded by the Madison Community Foundation, which has been an important partner of the Friends for years

There is major cooperation at the secondary level, too. In 1993, Middleton High School became the first in the state to merge environmental studies with the social science curriculum in a formal environmental studies program. Mike Duren and Debra Weitzel are the program’s faculty. The Friends have supported their work for years. In 2007 the program received the Environmental Excellence Award, a national competition sponsored by Sea World, Busch Gardens and Fuji Film.

The Award came with – among other benefits – a \$10,000 gift for the Friends and Middleton High School to split equally. The funds are being plowed back into their joint educational mission. (See the September 2007 newsletter for more information.) Weitzel also had students complete in the April 2008 Wisconsin Envirothon. Her winning team competed against teams from around the United States and Canada this summer at the Canon Envirothon at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff.

Janet Kane is a cum laude graduate of Knox College in Galesville, Illinois, who subsequently earned a PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Janet has dedicated her life to the joys and mysteries of education. Some educational roles have been pro-



Colleen Robinson Klug (top) and Janet Kane (bottom) manage the Friends’ environmental education programs.

fessional, others volunteer. She worked on curriculum development and evaluation at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at UW-Madison before retiring. Earlier, she worked at the University of Iowa.

Kane is now the epitome of the professional volunteer. She has worked for many years with the Girl Scouts and has been a member of the Friends of Pheasant Branch since 1995. She now serves on the Friends’ Board of Directors. Janet also served on the Middleton-Cross Plains School Board for nine years. The cooperation between the Friends of Pheasant Branch and the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District (MCPASD) has been broad and award-winning.

Kane’s expertise is complemented by the skills Colleen Robinson Klug brings to the mission of environmental education. “The professionalism of her passion is an invaluable asset in our work with both children and adults.” notes Kane. In the half-time Environmental Coordinator position, Klug is the only paid staff member of the Friends of Pheasant Branch.

A Madison native, Klug is a graduate of the nationally respected College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. She is completing a Masters Degree program at the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at UW-Madison and is a member of the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education. She also works part-time for the Department of Natural Resources. In describing herself, Klug explains, “My passion is creating and facilitating ways to connect people with their environment for the health and sustainability of life.”

The following people are on our 2008 Friends of Pheasant Branch Education Committee:

Jan Coombs, Colleen Feist, Trel Gimber, Janet Kane (Chair), Colleen Robinson Klug (Coordinator), Dreux Watermolen Stephanie Williams.



EDUCATION CORNER: Conservancy Days Program News

Explore the Conservancy with Programs this Fall!

This year's Conservancy Days have been quite popular and a treat for all involved. Thanks to financial support from the Friends, these programs are free and open to the public. Get program updates online at: www.pheasantbranch.org, or by contacting Colleen Robinson Klug, Education Coordinator, at 608-231-6035 or education@pheasantbranch.org.

Going Bat-y!

September 18, 2008; 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

Meet at Orchid Heights Park shelter, Middleton. Do you know how important bats are to the conservancy, and to us? Learn more about these amazing creatures from experts with Bat Conservation of Wisconsin - you'll even get to meet some friendly live bats! Learn, too, how you can get involved and help understand and protect these wildlife treasures.

Gathering Seeds for Future Prairies

October 16, 2008; 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Meet at northern conservancy entrance on Pheasant Branch Road, Middleton. The conservancy's prairies are examples of restored habitats. What was once lost, is back, including hundreds of plants, animals, insects, and clean water. Join us to

Kids for the Earth School Days Programs

The Friends are gearing up for another school year, with lots of opportunities for teachers and students.

Field Trips:

The Friends will continue to offer field trips for classes that want to spend some time in the conservancy. Our operating budget covers the costs to hire experienced naturalists and the district partners with us to cover transportation. All we need from teachers is to hear from them what they would like to do or learn on the trip! To arrange a field trip, please contact Colleen Robinson Klug, Education Coordinator.

Staff Development:

Each year, the MCPASD and the Friends work together to provide quality programs for teachers. Teachers can earn their required staff development hours as well as graduate credits for participating. Two opportunities are coming up for the 2008-2009 school year:

Our annual Teacher Bus Tour will roll into the conservancy on Wednesday, September 24th from 4:00 – 6:00 pm, to learn

Friends of Pheasant Branch

continue this legacy, by learning about the prairie, walking among its unique forms, and collecting prairie seeds. The seeds will be used to restore or enhance prairies at future sites, where you can say "I helped make this difference."

How and Why Stories and Legends

November 20, 2008; 6:30pm – 7:30pm

Location to be announced. Do you know why a chipmunk has stripes down its back? Or why a possum's tail is bare? Have you ever heard about how thunder and lightening came to be? Come to hear How and Why Stories and Legends and find the answers. Virtually every society in the world has folklore about the origins of the natural world and we will spend the evening enjoying some of these tales.

Conservancy Winter Walk

December 18, 2008

We encourage you to enjoy your own stroll through the conservancy this month. In all seasons, this place is a treasure. Before your walk, check out our list of things to look for while you are there. It's online in the Conservancy Education Day information at www.pheasantbranch.org

about the incredible setting the area offers for class field trips. Naturalists will join us so teachers can meet field trip leaders. Topics and possibilities will be discussed as we illustrate how outdoor experiences can compliment indoor curriculum.

Get ready for Project Wild and Project Wet! These two award-winning education projects and materials from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are teaming up for teachers in April 2009. The dynamic, hands-on, practical, and fun sessions leave teachers with a wealth of new resources, ideas, and even experience with incorporating water and wildlife activities and topics into existing curriculum across all ages preK – 12. This is twelve hours of training and the Friends feel so strongly about the quality of these projects, they are footing half the bill for teachers!

Teachers who wish to sign up for the staff development offerings above should register online at the district's website for professional development. Naturalists and teachers from outside of the district can inquire about participating with Colleen Robinson Klug directly.



GET OUT THERE: Field Trips & Volunteer Opportunities

Restoring & Managing the Conservancy

It has been a busy few months in the County part of the conservancy. Volunteer work groups have put in over 250 hours cutting and spraying honeysuckle, buckthorn, mulberry and other invasive shrubs. Burdock, sweet clover and garlic mustard have been pulled, dug or cut. Multiflora rose has been marked for treatment at a later time. The reed canary grass has been cut around the springs and other places. Seeds have been planted in a variety of spots, especially on the top of Fredrick's Hill. In addition, there have been several burns by the Middleton Fire Department and the County Parks burn crew.

Other projects are in process as well. Several members of the Friends have been monitoring 7 wells along the trail north of Century Ave. This will

help the city determine if the area is a wetland and inform them on what can be done to slow the run-off and erosion along the creek before it enters the marsh and the lake. We are also working with the DNR to monitor the water levels at the flume near the springs. This will help determine the effect the new city well near Highway Q and Century Avenue has on the water table and the springs. We are looking forward to the removal of the fence around the springs this fall. And did you notice the new fence at the top of the hill?

The Friends have implemented an "Adopt a Prairie" program. We know many people are interested in helping to

manage the conservancy but are unable to do so during scheduled work days. We invite you, your family, friends, neighborhood, business, etc. to select a tree, area, or section of the conservancy and care for it. A training session is held

to help you select what you want to adopt and determine what needs to be done. You choose the time you want to work on it, how often, and with whom. We give you support as needed and at different times of the year. You send us an email with this information and we report the information to the County Parks for their records.

Several families from the Northlake neighborhood have adopted different sections and are working hard at managing their area. If you are interested in "adopting", please contact Susan Gruber at office@pheasantbranch.org or call Susan at 836-3848.

We appreciate any help you give to maintaining this very special place. It takes many hands, many hours, many times to help the conservancy thrive as a beautiful natural and native place. Invasive plants keep coming back; but with your help, we hope to keep them under control.

Please join us for a work party this fall - see the schedule on the right. Or, for more information on how you might be involved, contact either Susan (info above) or Guerdon Coombs at 831-8823.



Marsh Marigold

Fall Work Parties

Thursdays 9:00 am - noon:

September 4th and 11th; October 2nd; November 6th

Saturdays 9:00 am - noon:

September 13th and 27th; October 4th, 11th and 18th; November 8th

Mondays 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm:

September 8th, October 13th

Meet at the Pheasant Branch Dane County Parking lot (fire number 4864) 1.2 miles north of Century Avenue on Pheasant Branch Road unless instructed otherwise. If you would like to be added to our email list to receive a reminder of work sessions, please contact Susan Gruber at office@pheasantbranch.org and she will add you to the restoration email list.

Classes

Qigong in Nature:

September 28, 2008, 11:00 am – Noon. Meet at the top of Fredrick's Knoll near the bench.

Come play in the energy of nature with Qigong (pronounced *chee-gung*) – an ancient Chinese exercise for the mind and body which means "the cultivation of life energy". Qigong combines slow, gentle movements with breathing and visualizations. Julia Riley will teach a free class: "Connecting Earth and Sky" and "Eight Actions of Qi" qigong. This is a great way to appreciate nature and "sense" the changing energy of the Earth as we move into Autumn.

You Can Make a Difference



YES! I want to help protect, restore and promote Middleton's Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

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State: _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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- Friends of Pheasant Branch
P.O. Box 628242
Middleton WI
53562-8242

The Friends of Pheasant Branch Mission:

To restore, preserve and promote the value of conservancy lands and other habitats in the Pheasant Branch Watershed for today and tomorrow.

Clip & Mail Today!

Great Fall Programs for Families, Teachers and Volunteers!
See pages six and seven inside

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